

Iowa Outdoors

Iowa Department of Natural Resources
www.iowadnr.gov

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STATE PARK CAMPGROUNDS BRACING FOR BUSIEST WEEK OF THE YEAR

DES MOINES – Iowa State Parks are swelling to capacity as campers and picnickers gather to celebrate Independence Day with friends and family. With July 4 falling on a Friday, campgrounds are expected to be busy all week leading up to the holiday.

The campsite reservation system has been a popular choice for many campers. A few electrical sites are still available for reservation at Pilot Knob and Lake Wapello state parks. Campers are reminded that Lake Wapello remains drained this summer and fall for emergency repairs to the dam.

A number of parks still have the handicap accessible electrical site available. For first come, first serve electrical sites, campers looking for a site should contact Nine Eagles, Red Hawk or Waubonsie state parks for site availability. More parks have non-electric sites available through the reservation system and by first come, first serve.

“The first come, first serve electric sites at most parks probably filled by last weekend,” said Kevin Szcodronski, chief of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources

state parks bureau. “If someone wants a campsite, they would be wise to call the park to check availability.”

With the parks swelling to near capacity, campers should plan ahead and bring plenty of ice, bug spray and sun screen. “Our campgrounds will be busy so people need to really be aware of their noise level and to be courteous to their neighbors,” Szcodronski said. “Leave the fireworks at home. There are a number of fireworks shows across the state for campers to enjoy without having to deal with an amateur in the campground.”

The DNR is also encouraging campers to get their firewood from local sources so to not unintentionally transport any tree diseases or invasive species from one location to another. Szcodronski said parks staff will also be discouraging campers from burning anything in a fire ring other than wood, and that includes scrap lumber.

“You would not believe the things that are burnt in the fire ring. Our staff finds all kinds of trash, melted plastic, plywood scraps, empty cans, lawn chairs, and old pieces of metal. Burning that stuff releases pollutants into the air and leaves debris in the fire ring. So we are going to visit with campers about why we only want firewood used in the rings,” he said.

The DNR will be fully staffed at the state parks during the extended holiday weekend. “Family gatherings over a holiday weekend at a state park are how memories are made, and we are happy to help with the enjoyment,” Szcodronski said.

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FLOODED HATCHERIES FIGHT BACK

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

On a sunny morning at Big Spring, everything appears normal. The big wooden sign welcomes visitors to the Department of Natural Resources trout rearing station, along the Turkey River near Elkader. A closer look, though, and the signature of the 2008 flood appears. A cornstalk is lodged overhead in the welcome sign; carried there by the wall of water spilling over levee, 40 yards away.

“After the 1991 flood, we added 18 inches to the levee. Still, the river surged four feet above *that*. Once the water came over, we only had four or five minutes to get out,” recalls hatchery manager Gary Siegwarth, pointing out the latest ‘record flood level’ mark in the hatchery’s gutted office and shop...34 inches above the previous one. Workers hauled some supplies and equipment to higher ground. A lot didn’t make it.

The trout 'inventory' took a hit. "We probably lost 75,000 catchable trout to be stocked this year, as well as 50,000 fingerlings (being raised for 2009)," estimated Siegwarth. About 15,000 trout were salvaged from the hatchery's ponds and transferred back to the raceways. The inventory will be re-stocked with the help of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and states of Wisconsin, Missouri, Nebraska and North Dakota who are sending 100,000 rainbow trout fingerlings to the hatcheries that will be grown and stocked in 2009. In addition, a shipment of fertilized rainbow trout eggs from Montana is on the way that will be hatched and grown for the winter 2009 stocking schedule.

DNR crews from across eastern Iowa helped net trout—salvaging about 15,000 that had washed into the nearby ponds. They also cut downed trees, power washed the office and hauled away debris. "We had anywhere from 15 to 25 people a day helping," said hatchery technician Dave Gould. "Neighbors let us use their big tractors to help clean up. Campers came in and helped clean the campground."

To the south, the DNR hatchery at Manchester fared better, damage-wise, but still lost trout when the Maquoketa River backed up Spring Branch and covered the raceways, grounds and office with a foot of water. "We did lose about 20,000 catchable trout, though, and a higher percentage of the fingerlings here," listed hatchery manager Dave Marolf. "We are going to be stocking for the rest of the year at about 80 percent of the pre-flood level. We are back on the stocking schedule posted on the internet. We came out better than expected from our initial estimates."

More important, perhaps, is what the hatchery held *onto*. Many thousands of fingerlings were loaded into trucks and sent to the DNR's third trout station, at Decorah. "We lost less than 20 percent of our brood trout. We always carry a surplus and those big fish like those deep dark holes, so many of them were still in the pond," assured Marolf. Those big three to 10 pound brood fish are the backbone of Iowa's hatchery program. They produce the rainbow, brook and brown trout that go into those coldwater streams across nine northeast counties, as well as urban fisheries in the winter, ranging from Council Bluffs and Des Moines to Davenport, Dubuque, Cedar Falls and Mason City.

However, that double blow from flood waters is no knockout punch. "We want people to realize we are getting trout out there," stressed Siegwarth. "We are reduced in numbers but are still putting out more trout per angler on these streams that don't seem to have that much pressure, yet." He surmises cool, wet weather....delays in planting...and now floods and cleanup have kept anglers away from the 50 trout streams in northeast Iowa. "It's a great escape for people; especially up here as the river recedes. Trout fishing is going to be phenomenal all summer long on the Turkey River, due to all the escapees from the hatchery."

Reduced trout numbers didn't keep Ken Klinkner, of Dubuque, away from Sny-Magill stream near Garnavillo this week. Fishing once a week, he had a nice 14-inch rainbow in the bucket, when the stocking truck pulled up. "They're still around, you know. They go into different coves and under rocks (during high water). You just have to

work the creek up and down; one here, one there,” Klinkner observed, as he pulled in another rainbow; probably one which was just stocked a few yards away.

And the prospect of lots of ‘loose’ trout in some streams is too hard to pass up for some. “We had a guy come in who never had a license before. He was 73, so we told him he qualified for a lifetime license. He just said ‘No, I just want a license and a trout stamp’ for *this* year,” laughed Marolf. “It’s been gridlock in the parking lot here; especially with those big brood trout missing.”

Fairport facility escapes major damage

Near Muscatine, the DNR’s Fairport Hatchery escaped major damage as the Mississippi River rose out of its banks over the last couple weeks. The facility is used primarily for raising bass and bluegills for private pond stocking across Iowa. “Our lower ponds are still underwater,” reported hatchery manager Ken Snyder. “They held feeder fish for the bass, which are probably gone now.”

The high water came just as crews were preparing to stock bass in ponds, so many of those fish were scooped out and held in a large tanker truck, before being parceled out for distribution. Snyder says fall bluegill stocking might be affected if those flooded ponds don’t dry out soon, so they can be restocked with spawning bluegills.

The water rose over the floor of the hatchery’s pump room and holding house. Sandbags kept the water away from the pumps, minimizing damage to facilities.

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STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS

As the Fourth of July approaches, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources is reminding boaters and anglers to take a minute and check for any unwanted hitchhikers to protect Iowa lakes and streams.

Eurasian watermilfoil, zebra mussels, and other aquatic invasive species often spread between waterbodies by hitchhiking on boats, in bait buckets, on aquatic plants, and with other equipment used in the water. These aquatic invaders can create serious problems if they become established in our waters.

"Public action is the key to preventing the spread of aquatic invasive species," said Kim Bogenschutz, DNR aquatic invasive species program coordinator. “We recently sent a mailing to all registered boat owners in Iowa about zebra mussels and the steps boaters should take to prevent their spread – inspect, clean, drain.”

Inspect your boat, trailer, and equipment and **clean** them of any visible plants, animals, or mud before leaving a waterbody.

Drain water from livewell, bilge, transom, motor, and bait buckets before leaving a waterbody.

Clean and **dry** boats, trailers and equipment. Before transporting to another waterbody either:

Spray/wash your boat, trailer and equipment with high-pressure and/or hot water;
or

Dry your boat and equipment for at least 5 days.

Dispose of unwanted bait in the trash. Never release plants, fish, or animals into a waterbody unless they came out of that waterbody.

It is illegal to possess or transport prohibited aquatic invasive species, such as zebra mussels, in Iowa. The fine for violating this law increased to \$500 on July 1. Signs are posted at public accesses to identify infested waters. More information about aquatic invasive species and a list of infested waters can be found in the 2008 Iowa Fishing Regulations booklet.

For more information contact Kim Bogenschutz, Aquatic Invasive Species Program Coordinator, at 515-432-2823.

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WINDBREAK ASSISTANCE FUNDS AVAILABLE

DES MOINES - The Iowa Department of Natural Resources Forestry Bureau has set aside funding to assist private landowners who sustained significant windbreak damage due to this season's tornadoes, high winds and flooding.

According to State Forester Paul Tauke, the Forestry Bureau has only \$10,000 available through a special private grant fund, so he is insisting that landowners work with existing conservation programs such as the forestry/native grass portion of the Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) program, the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) or the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP).

"The existing programs reimburse landowners around 75 percent of their windbreak establishment costs. We are proposing to pick up the costs of the other 25 percent for those folks who got hit hard by this spring's weather. By insisting that landowners work with ongoing and existing programs we can leverage the modest amount of funding that we can provide to help to a larger number of Iowans," Tauke said.

Interested landowners should contact their District Forester and/or their local Soil and Water Conservation District. Forestry information can be found at <http://www.iowadnr.gov/forestry/district.html>.

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IOWA DNR SENDING FIREFIGHTERS TO CALIFORNIA, OTHER INCIDENTS

AMES – As wild fires continue to rage in parts of the west, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources fire program has started to dispatch wildland firefighters to northern California and other places in need.

The fire program recently sent three wildland firefighters from Iowa to the Iron Complex (27 fires) in northern California. The three were part of a 20 person Type 2 Iowa crew, dispatched out of the Missouri Iowa Coordination Center out of Rolla, Mo. The crew is made up of interagency crewmembers from the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Missouri Department of Conservation and Iowa DNR representatives.

Of the three firefighters that went to California, two are experienced at fighting fires in several different states. Two are also from the heavily damaged area of Parkersburg. One lost his family home and car and the other lost his car while working at a local business and led people into a safe area in the building as the tornado struck.

“It amazes me to see these two young men, going to fight fire in another state as their own property was destroyed by a tornado, just a few short weeks ago,” said Ryan Schlater, fire specialist, with the Iowa DNR’s Forestry Bureau.

The fire program also organizes local recovery efforts as well, sending a saw crew to Parkersburg for a week and helping with flooding activities across Iowa.

Sending wildland firefighters to national incidents is not new to the Iowa DNR fire program, as they have been sending people for several years.

“Last year we sent 36 firefighters on 47 different deployments across the nation,” said Schlater. “This year looks to be busier with multiple fires burning in northern California, with most of the fire season still ahead of us.”

For more information, contact Ryan Schlater or any fire staff at 515-233-1161.

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SUMMER LOOK AT DEER SEASONS, QUOTAS

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Ice, snow...and catastrophic flooding have marked 2008 as we close the first half of the year. You can't blame a lot of us for looking a little deeper into the calendar; say to the hunting seasons? Lousy pheasant-raising weather and CRP acres pressed back into crop production mean upland game prospects will be lean. That makes deer hunting the probably bright spot, heading into this fall.

Deer tags have been liberally available in the past few years and this season will offer more of the same. Season dates, special zones and county by county quotas were set recently by the Iowa Natural Resource Commission. Allocation of any sex tags—which allow a hunter to take bucks—essentially will be the same. The goal, of course, is to bring deer populations to acceptable levels statewide. That means harvesting more does—antlerless deer.

“The only major change is an increase of about 11,000 antlerless tags,” confirms Willie Suchy, Department of Natural Resources wildlife research supervisor. “Antlerless tags seem to be working real well. In some counties, almost 75 percent of all deer killed are antlerless, with 60 percent of them does. With that kind of harvest, we'll get those counties down, as well.”

That means 120,000 county-specific tags are out there for hunters willing to kill antlerless deer. There will be 39 counties with more available this fall and winter. Most of them lie in the three southern tiers; though several northeast counties were bumped up, too. Another 58 counties remain at last year's quotas.

Across north central and northwest Iowa, 22 counties will—again—offer no antlerless tags. They are among about 40 with deer numbers close to target levels, with another 30 heading in the right direction. “In another year or two, we should be in pretty good shape there,” offers Suchy, noting that road-killed deer dropped about eight percent in 2007 and that 2008 aerial and spotlight surveys under indicate a downturn, too. “That leaves 20-some counties where we really have to concentrate on getting extra hunting pressure,” he said. Those counties are in southern and northeast Iowa primarily; generally home to prime deer habitat and fewer people.

Special hunts--in state or county parks, or in or around cities--remain popular. There are 60 such hunts this fall and winter. The Commission also approved the popular Thanksgiving weekend and late January seasons, for another year.

Of course, any hunter sitting in an October bow stand or posted up on a December shotgun season drive still expects that big buck to wander by. That is why any sex tags remain the basic ‘must have.’ More hunters are taking advantage of the antlerless tags. It

might be just one, to use during a party hunt or it could be a handful during the late season as a hunter takes advantage of the extra dates. With seasons stretching over four months, and with only one or two bucks allowed, depending on your choice of seasons, we are starting to get the hint. “Our hunters are really adapting to the quality deer management philosophy,” underscores Suchy. “You have to kill does and pass up the little bucks to keep the herd from growing. You can still have a great time.”

Details of the seasons and regulations; including adjustments in the blaze orange requirement for ground blinds, youth season regulations and landowner eligibility will be spelled out in the deer regulations booklets available on-line or at license outlets and DNR offices later this summer.

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NATURAL RESOURCE COMMISSION TO MEET IN LEHIGH

LEHIGH – The Natural Resource Commission of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will meet at 8:30 a.m., July 10, at the Prairie Resource Center in Brushy Creek State Recreation Center, 2820 Brushy Creek Road, near Lehigh.

Commission members and DNR staff will meet at 12 p.m., June 9, at the Country Inn & Suites, 3259 5th Avenue South, in Fort Dodge, for a tour of the area. The tour and the commission meeting are open to the public.

Members of the commission are Kim Francisco, Elizabeth Garst, Carol Kramer, Gregory Drees, Janelle Rettig, William Bird and Tammi Kircher. The Director of the DNR is Richard Leopold.

The following is the agenda for the July meeting.

- Approve Agenda
- Approve Minutes of June 12 Meeting
- Director’s Remarks
- Construction Projects
 - Glass Wetland Reserve Program (WRP), Sac County – Wetland Restoration
 - Otter Creek Marsh, Tama County – Dike #1 Repairs
 - Lake Keomah State Park, Mahaska County – Office and Service Building
 - Thompson WRP, Fremont County – Wetland Restoration
 - Ferley WRP, Worth County – Wetland Restoration
 - Honey Creek Resort, Appanoose County – 28 Cabins, Driveways and Parking Pads
 - Waubonsie State Park, Fremont County – WaShawtee Cabins Renovation
- Land Acquisition

- Little Sioux Wildlife Management Area (WMA), Clay County – The Nature Conservancy (TNC) (Burkhart Tract)
- Eagle Lake WMA, Hancock County – Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation (Rasmuson Tract)
- Lake Edwards/8-mile Pits Wetland Complex, Hancock County – Willard Peck
- Big Marsh WMA, Butler County – Larry Asche and Betty McCandless
- Conservation Easement, Jackson County – Timothy and Laura Derga
- Boone Forks WMA, Hamilton County – Tim and Kathy Finucan
- Boone Forks WMA, Hamilton County – Boone Valley Izaak Walton League
- Easement, Margo Frankel Woods State Park – Polk County
- Management Agreement, Denning Conservation Area, Lee County – Lee County Conservation Board
- Honey Creek Resort State Park Update
- Final Rule – Chapter 40, Boating Speed and Distance Zoning – Catfish Creek
- Notice of Intended Action - Chapter 15, General License Regulations
- Final Rule – Chapter 40, Boating Speed and Distance Zoning – Lake Cornelia
- Final Rule – Chapter 40, Boating Speed and Distance Zoning – Lake Odessa
- Landowner Incentive Program/TNC Gant Funds Agreement
- Notice of Intended Action – Chapter 85, Trotlines
- Notice of Intended Action – Chapter 88, Fishing Tournaments
- Black Hawk Lake Diagnostic and Feasibility Study
- Panfish Bag Limits Information
- Publicly Owned Lakes Program – Watershed Selection
- Donations Brief
- Carter Lake Water Supply Agreement
- General Discussion
- Items for Next Meeting, Aug. 14, Louisa County

For more information, contact Kim Rasler at 515-281-7122.

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